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STATUE OF OLIVER P. MORTON,

ERECTED IN STATUARY HALL,

UNITED STATES CAPITOL.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. ABRAHAM L. BRICK,
OF INDIANA,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

ON ITS ACCEPTANCE,

APRIL 14, 1900.

"He spoke the message of his birth, and in the gloom of time it has become a star, that gleams and shines on the crowds of countless waves that ebb and flow in human life and round about the Ship of State."

WASHINGTON.

1900.



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H O N. A B R A H A M L. B R I C K.

The House having under consideration the following resolution:

"*Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),* That the statue of Oliver P. Morton presented by the State of Indiana, to be placed in Statuary Hall, is accepted in the name of the United States; and that the thanks of Congress be tendered the State for the contribution of the statue of one of the most eminent citizens and illustrious statesmen of the Republic.

"Second. That a copy of these resolutions, suitably engrossed and duly authenticated, be transmitted to the governor of the State of Indiana"—

Mr. STEELE said:

Mr. SPEAKER: In 1864, soon after the completion of the present Hall of the House of Representatives, a law was enacted by Congress which contained the following provision:

And the President is authorized to invite all the States to provide and furnish statues, in marble or bronze, not exceeding two in number for each State, of deceased persons who have been citizens thereof and illustrious for their historic renown or for distinguished civil or military services, such as each State may deem to be worthy of this national commemoration; and when so furnished the same shall be placed in the old Hall of the House of Representatives in the Capitol of the United States, which is set apart, or so much thereof, as may be necessary, for the purpose herein indicated.

In compliance with this resolution we are about to accept, as a gift from the State of Indiana, a statue of her illustrious son, Oliver P. Morton.

Mr. BRICK was recognized.

Mr. BRICK. Mr. Speaker, a great State, renowned in him, to-day answers to the call of the United States, and presents to the whole country he served so well, the statue of Oliver P. Morton, placed in her national hall of heroes, there to be reverently guarded so long as adamant endures and memory wakes.

The man who was known as the great war governor of Indiana, peerless among all the magistrates of those mighty days, requires no other tribute than the simple statement of that giant fact.

And this monument need not be erected for his sake; but we plant it there for his country's sake.

The noblest sentiment of any land is the debt it pays, in its richest excess of tenderest memory, bestowed on honored dead.

How poor and desolate this world would be without its monumental grave, without the quickening conscience of its remembered great!

And so to-day, after more than twenty years of days, with cumulative tense, the public grief bows homage to his name and lays upon his tomb a laurel wreath of glory.

Greatness lies in nobility of mind and goodness of heart, as well as in illustrious deeds.

And Oliver P. Morton lived the brief day that nature spares to man, but that day of his was fuller filled with deeds than hours, with palpitating thoughts than dial marks.

His name comes down to us radiant with a land redeemed, jeweled with the joys of hope, and shining bright and clear in a people reunited, where every man reveres the flag and not one wears a manacle.

This is a generation when kings and conquerors die and naught remains but speechless dust; the end of all is six feet of earth—so spoke Napoleon.

A day when love of man and country confers a prouder name, a grander title than all the glory found in war's grim pageantry of crimsoned conquest.

A day when earth's immortal crown is placed on heads that think—whose proudest epanaults of honor adorn the arm that works—whose most immemorial badge of heraldry reclines on breasts where hearts have felt.

Napoleon spoke better than he knew—wiser than he thought.

To the man who wears the borrowed plumes of ancestry or sports the fading livery of favoritism, the grave ends all.

To the warrior whose sordid ambition may have changed the map of nations, to the soldier whose glory clings round the crown of a destroyer, “the end of all is six feet of earth.”

But to the patriot, to the constructor, to the empire builder, to one who learned from mother's lips and father's face and breathed it in from the very air of native soil that his first and last duty was to his country; that to live for her is honor and to die for her is glory—to such a man as Oliver P. Morton—for him to die was to just begin to live.

No widows or orphans were made for him, no tears were shed for his glory.

But his grave is watered by the dews of gratitude and lighted by the stars of a nation's love.

History is like the sibyl; she reveals her secrets leaf by leaf. Time and events solve what no prophet dare forecast.

The price of eminence is a cross and a crown.

To be great is to be maligned, to be misunderstood, to live amidst the curses of the present, and to die in the blessings of the future.

Living, he was a rival; dead, a benefactor.

The grave and mother earth cleanses all.

The man they called a demagogue is now known as a patriot. He whom they called a tyrant, history tells us was a man hurricane battling for the life of a nation—his country—the only true Republic that ever lived.

The man they thought a politician, the sage of events reveals to have been an inspired statesman with a soul and a message.

He delivered that message, and in the realm of time it has become a star that gleams and shines on the crowds of countless waves that ebb and flow in human life and round about the Ship of State.

Oliver Perry Morton was born of rugged mold, fresh from the soil, a native Indianian. Sooner or later the stock of all great men must be rejuvenated from the soil.

He came from the Middle West at a time when mighty, elemental forces were evolving within her.

She had not the proud heritage of New York; neither did she possess the polish of Boston; but she did have the smoke and fire and dust out of which worlds are made and swing into orbit.

And it was from such soil and in this air and sky in which he grew.

In the very heart of that land where in his day the battle of ages was begun, he awoke to the contest like a sleeping giant.

He continued that contest, a great blast furnace, with the brain of a Jove, with the courage of a Titan, and the heart of a mother, until that afternoon when he kissed his wife and sons to say, "I am worn out." These were his last words.

But the task was finished, and Morton's life work was over.

He was the foremost man in all the nation to maintain the Union. He lived long enough to perpetuate for all time the results of the war.

This was enough for one man to do.

He is Indiana's greatest son.

Who shall say to what degree he is great among the nation's heroes? There are no degrees in masterpieces.

There is one thing we know—that in one way and another they have all reached those sublime heights of human greatness to which God descends and man ascends.

There he will remain.

His were the days of rock and bronze, of decks wet with blood and men black with trials.

Days of crises and ominous hope for human liberty.

Days filled with the dread music of preparation and impending suspense—music mingled with the muttered roll of thunders and the crash of empire.

They demanded a Colossus, and in Oliver P. Morton was found a Thor.

A nation was to be saved, and there was no time for argument. No disturbing doubt of vacillating ethics swerved his mind when the issues were so vast and the field a kingdom.

Guns were to be bought, an army to be raised, and men to be cared for.

He was first of all the Union to telegraph Lincoln: "On behalf of the State of Indiana, I tender to you for the defense of the nation ten thousand men."

That was the message of his birth. He filled it with two hundred thousand men and all the days and hours of his life.

It was a message of blood and iron.

To-day it stands a granite statue—an imperishable name.

From that moment he became a god of war, and the arm he raised remained aloft till it nerveless fell in death, "worn out" in his country's cause.

He brooked no opposition, he spurned all compromise.

He had but one passion, his country; but one principle, its salvation, now and forever.

To him firmness was mercy, to bend a crime.

The Union was more sacred than even human blood, than his own life.

And so he lived, a giant oak, but around his rugged breast there twined all the vines and flowers of manly love, the love of home and country, of wife and child and friend.

We will not trespass here on old remembered days of long ago, when love and joy had mingled into wedded bliss upon the happy hearth of home, nor tell of days when hand in hand they wandered down the shadowy slope in self-forgetting rapture.

There is a love too great for utterance, a grief too strong for sentiment.

No soldier ever had a truer friend, no nation a better soldier.

When they left him for the battlefield his hand clasped every man's—a brother: as they fought in the carnage of conflict, with hearts of oak and nerves of steel, he was their comrade, and in the night of pain and death his ministering hand was always there, with tearful eye—their nurse and friend.

And then, when over all the blue and the gray, the smoke rolled away forever, he was the good father of every widow and orphan; he kept green the graves of the dead, and gave honor and relief to the living.

As some one said, in many a humble home where his picture was suspended by the side of the young soldier fallen, the message that the "good governor" had ceased to live would bring sadness as if death had again broken that family circle and once more had chilled the fires of the family hearthstone.

There came to the executive office at Indianapolis two old Quaker friends of Governor Morton, to get from his own lips news from the front. When they heard his words, and looked into that great, solemn countenance saddened by the love of menaced liberty, and tear-stained by the agony of the boys in blue, the eldest one, a man of seventy years or more, reverently placed his hands on Morton's head, and with simple pathos invoked God's providence with "May God bless you, Governor Morton."

Many a soldier has echoed that prayer: the nation has reiterated it.

And, Mr. Speaker, it must be so; God has blessed you, Governor Morton. [Applause.]

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